

SB203 Hearing (Sen. Joe Balyeat)

Chairman Arntzen, members of House Local Government, for the record I'm Senator Joe Balyeat, representing SD 34, north Gallatin County and Broadwater County.

All this bill does is permit the local sheriff to authorize the use of Civil Air Patrol Cadets in search and rescue missions. While this change may be insignificant in the grand scheme of things, it is significant to some of our constituents. I'll direct your attention to the email letter I received from Scott Shaffer of Belgrade MT. <Read excerpts>

I'm also passing out letters indicating support from CAP's MT Wing Commander, Col. Rob Hoffman and Lt/Col. Paul Tweden. In fact, Col. Hoffman may be here to testify in person today.

In committee, we heard testimony that MT is one of only a handful of states that doesn't allow this. This bill is only permissive, not mandatory. It just gives the local Sheriff authority to allow under-18 CAP cadets participate in search and rescue, if he feels that's beneficial. My feeling is – when your dealing with life-and-death rescue missions where time is of the essence, the more competent help you have the better; and the local sheriff is best able to judge the situation.

There were no opponents in the Senate hearing. SB 203 passed unanimously in Senate Judiciary, and was also unanimous on 2nd and 3rd reading on the Senate floor.

I'll sit and listen to the long line of proponents and opponents on this important legislation, and I reserve the right to close.